

Message Text

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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION TO AURORA CONTRACT

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1. THE GAZETTE OF JULY 22 CARRIED EDITORIAL ON ORION/AURORA
DEAL WHICH, CAST IN SPORTS TERMS PROBABLY PROMPTED BY TOO MUCH
OLYMPICS VIEWING, WAS SCATHING ATTACK ON GOC. IT IS SHORT
ENOUGH TO QUOTE IN FULL"

"OFF THE GROUND, AT LAST.

"THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE ADVICE OF CANADIAN MILITARY
EXPERTS THAT THE AURORA, NEE ORION, IS A FORMIDABLE RECONN-
AISSANCE AND ANTI-SUBMARINE ATTACK AIRCRAFT. FURTHER, CON-
TINUANCE OF THE ANTI-SUBMARINE DEFENCE ROLE FITS CANADIAN
GEOGRAPHY, EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME
CONSTITUTING A VITAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATO DEFENCE SYSTEM.

"CONTROVERSY HAS REVOLVED AROUND TWO OTHER QUESTIONS.
COULD FEWER AIRCRAFT OF THE AURORA'S CAPABILITY HAVE SUFFICED,
PERHAPS SUPPLEMENTED BY CHEAPER AIRCRAFT FOR SOME SURVEILLANCE
AND SOVEREIGNTY-PATROL TASKS IN WHICH THE AURORA AMOUNTS TO
OVERKILL? CAN THERE BE ANY EXCUSE FOR THE
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APPARENT MISHANDLING OF THE CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS?

"DEFENSE MINISTER JAMES RICHARDSON HAS BOBBED AND WEAVED SO OFTEN ON THE QUESTION OF THE MILITARY NECESSITY OF THE AURORA, RATHER THAN SOME OTHER PLANE OR MIX OF PLANES, THAT PARLIMENT AND PUBLIC CAN HAVE LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN HIM.

"THE HANDLING OF THE CONTRACT WAS BUNGLED, WITH MR. RICHARDSON AND SUPPLY AND SERVICES MINISTER JEAN-PIERRE GOYER IN OPEN DISAGREEMENT WITH ONE ANOTHER, CIVIL SERVANTS AT ODDS, AND BLAME BEING BATTED BACK AND FORTH--AND OVER TO LOCKHEED. NAVAL SOURCES MAINTAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD GONE AHEAD AND SPENT ON LEOPARD TANKS WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABEL TO GET THE AURORA PROGRAM UNDER WAY, THUS ACCOUNTING FOR THE LONG DELAY OF A FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT.

"CANADA AND ITS ARMED FORCES END UP WITH A GOOD AIRCRAFT, BUT PERHAPS TOO MUCH OF A GOOD AIRCRAFT. THE GOVERNMENT ENDS UP WITH A FLAGRANT DEMONSTRATION OF MANAGERIAL INCOMPETENCE."

2. IN LONGER AND MORE TEMPERATE EDITORIAL, THE MONTREAL STAR SAYS THE SIGNING "DOES NOT DISPEL QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER CANADA IS BUYING THE RIGHT AIRCRAFT FOR THE RIGHT JOB AT THE RIGHT TIME"... BUT AT LEAST THE DEAL "LOOKS MORE REASONABLE AND BUSINESSLIKE THAN THE PREVIOUS ABORTIVE AGREEMENTS." IT GIVES CREDIT FOR THIS TO JEAN-PIERRE GOYER WHO "WAS ABLE TO RESTRAIN THE ENTHUSIASM FOR AN ORION AT ANY COST WHICH HAD BEEN DISPLAYED BY DEFENSE MINISTER RISHARDSON." EDITORIAL THEN URGES THAT, BEFORE CABINET GOES SHOPPING AGAIN, IT ESTABLISH A PRECISE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS NEEDED TO CARRY OUT COMMITMENTS TO NATO AND FOR SOVEREIGNTH ROLE AND RESIST TEMPTATIONS TO BE SEDUCED BY GLAMOROUS, OFTEN EPHEMERAL PROMISES OF SPIN-OFF BENEFITS FOR CANADIAN INDUSTRY.

3. LE DEVOIR OF JULY 22, IN AN ARTICLE BY ONE OF ITS EDITORIAL WRITERS, SAID THE STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS RICHARDSON AND GOYER CONCERNING THE ORION-AURORA REVEAL THAT THIS CONTRACT MARKS BEGINNING OF MODERNIZATION OF CANADIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ASKED FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS. THE PLANES WILL COST \$697 MILLION, BUT OTHER COSTS SUCH AS THOSE FOR FLIGHT TRAINING AND GROUND EQUIPMENT WILL BRING CONTRACT UNCLASSIFIED

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TO JUST OVER \$1 BILLION. THE AURORA, EVEN IF IT IS A STRIPPED-DOWN ORION, WILL BE ABLE TO MEET CANADA'S NEEDS FOR ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL, BORDER SURVEILLANCE, SEARCH AND RESCUE, ETC., BUT ITS PURCHASE WAS REALLY MADE NECESSARY BY CANADA'S NATO COMMITMENTS. THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION OF BACKING DOWN ON THE ORIOR-AURORA DEAL. EVEN IF CANADA HAD FELT THAT IT COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT AND THAT ITS ARGUS COULD CONTINUE TO DO THE JOB, ITS NATO OBLIGATIONS WOULD HAVE KEPT IT FROM BACKING

DOWN. SO LONG AS CANADA IS PART OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE,
IT WOULD BE NAIVE TO BELIEVE THAT IT HAS COMPLETE CONTROL
OVER SUCH DECISIONS. LET US REMEMBER THAT THE VIENNA ARMS
REDUCTION TALKS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED, APPARENTLY WITHOUT
HAVING MADE ANY PROGRESS IN LAST THREE YEARS. WHATEVER THE
RESULTS OF THE U.S. ELECTIONS, THE OBJECT OF WESTERN DEFENSE
WILL REMAIN TO COUNTER SOVIET MILITARY POTENTIAL AND EVERY
PARTNER WILL BE CALLED ON TO ASSUME A LARGER SHARE OF THE COMMON
DEFENSE. MODERNIZATION OF DEFENSE EQUIPMENT IS THE ORDER OF
THE DAY.
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